



MUMS for MUMS stands
"on the side of mums in need"

Newsletter

June – August 2007

Fresh Hope for Fistula Cases

Mums for Mums has recently started helping a small number of Fistula Cases, as part of the Enderta Woreda HIV / AIDS campaign. Below is Letekiros' story, one of the women helped by Mums for Mums

Letekiros's story:

Letekiros is in her mid-thirties, from a small town called Mayalem in the Enderta Woreda

Letekiros' problem began with the birth of her last child – having had eight children previously; her ninth delivery was complicated and difficult.

When the MfMs voluntary counsellor found her, she had been suffering with the fistula caused by the birth for almost three years. Right from the start, Letekiros was forced out of her home because of the smell of leaking urine. It was shameful for her to be around the home or around any of her relatives with the constant smell.

Initially she was brought to the MfMs office by the Enderta voluntary counsellor. Then MfMs in collaboration with Pathfinder International Ethiopia arranged for her admission to Mekelle Fistula Hospital, where she was successfully treated.

After complete cure, she returned to her village to witness the change brought about by the treatment.

Speaking from her own experience, she encouraged the young people of her community to prevent other cases like her own –

- To the young teenagers, pressurized by their fiancées, she told them to avoid an early marriage;
- To the young women hiding in their rooms with a fistula problem, they should contact MfMs medical staff to get the treatment that can cure them;
- To pregnant mothers, to get to a medical centre or hospital for safe and proper delivery, for their own sakes as well as their babies'.

Cases like Letekiros' have a real impact on the community – by sharing her experience, she has probably helped other women in her village and family to avoid making the same mistakes and suffering the same distress she has undergone.

Fistulas - MfMs starts helping out

Fistula problems, previously unheard of in many countries, have become worldwide knowledge thanks to the groundbreaking work of the Fistula Hospital in Addis Ababa. In the last year or so, branches of the Hospital have opened in Mekelle and Bahir Dar to tackle this widespread problem in Ethiopia.

As part of its Enderta voluntary counselling educating rural people about HIV / AIDS and Reproductive Health, MfMs has begun referring Fistula cases to the Mekelle Fistula Hospital.

Fistula cases are caused by difficult or protracted child delivery, leaving the women with a continual problem of incontinence.

Thanks to funding by Pathfinder International, Ethiopia, a number of fistula or fistula-related cases have been successfully treated. Without such help, women with fistulas can face years of discrimination or even exclusion by the community where they live, as well as rejection by the husband or the husband's family.



Letekiros with S/r Blen

Appreciating our Volunteer Counsellors and Care-Providers

As well as a small staff of paid workers, much of MfMs' work is carried by a band of dedicated volunteers, working away in the towns and districts where MfMs projects are based. These volunteer counsellors and care providers are fighting against the spread of HIV / AIDS in the communities where they work. As a mark of appreciation for their selfless and often unheralded work, MfMs recently held a special program at its Mekelle centre.

The program, on Saturday late afternoon, 26th May, was attended by a total of 98 MfMs volunteer counsellors and care providers, assembled from the towns of Mekelle, Adwa and Axum, as well as the Enderta Woreda.

The program included music & dance provided by a local band, food & drinks, and speeches from a number of invited guests: the guests included Dr Solomon Inquai, Dr Welde-Rufael Alemayehu, Speaker of the House of the Tigray Parliament, and Dr Gebre-Ab – Head of the Bureau of Health of Tigray Region.

A number of the guests spoke in appreciation of the volunteer counsellors' and care providers' work and the way MfMs impacts the local community.



Celebrating... with Tilhit Tigrain dance

The Volunteer Counsellors' and Care Providers' Teams:

Mekelle:

- 27 Home-Based Care Providers,
- 13 Reproductive-Health Agents

Enderta Woreda:

- 22 Counsellors,
- 16 Reproductive-health-agents

Adwa & Axum:

- 30 Home-Based Care Providers also providing some counseling and teaching on Reproductive-Health

Highlights from Dr Solomon Inquai's speech:

"As a family member I've known about MfMs from the beginning: to start with it was trying to help young vulnerable women with the many problems they were facing. It still is focussing on the destitute, vulnerable particularly single mum on the street."

"MfMs began its assistance programs with the help of Tigray Development Association, training the young women in carpentry / woodwork, building construction, carpet-making, hair-dressing and kindergarten teaching."

"When MfMs started out, there was no idea that it could progress to the level it is now, as typified by the new centre where we are holding today's program."

"Now, all of us gathered here as workers and supporters of MfMs, need to work together to continue the progress. Especially, it gives me a great pleasure as an invited guest today to see all the volunteer counsellors and care providers assembled here, all of you making an impact to counteract the effects of HIV / AIDS in the neighbourhoods where you work."

Experience Sharing:

During their daily visits of local people and families, many useful lessons are learnt by the volunteer counsellors and care providers, which can benefit not only themselves, but also their co-workers. With everyone gathered for the celebration program, the opportunity was taken to share these lessons - most of the Saturday morning was spent by the Adwa, Axum and Enderta counsellors & care-providers making the rounds of the Mekelle Districts with their Mekelle counterparts.

As well as sharing individual lessons, a number of general points were raised – Adwa & Axum voluntary counsellors & care-providers appreciated the work in Mekelle, where limited additional funds are used to great effect, supporting a small number of bed-ridden / house-bound patients.

Graduation of Skills-Training trainees

Sharing the honours with the volunteer counsellors and care providers at the Saturday program were Mums for Mums latest batch of skills-training graduates. A total of 41 young women graduated from the skills-training programs, 20 in knitting, 4 in dressmaking and 17 in embroidery. The program included a short graduation ceremony, in which the graduates received certificates from Dr Welde-Rufael Alemayehu, the speaker of the House of the Tigray Parliament.



*One of the Embroidery graduates
With a sample of her work*

Balancing the Books

Balancing the books is a concern for any individual and organization. In March this year MfMs was helped out by Sefanit, Teberah's daughter on a visit to her family in Mekelle. Sefanit, an experienced Chartered Certified Accountant living in the UK, took time out from her holiday to help out with MfMs accounts. Sefanit was a big help in recruiting a new permanent accountant – networking with accountancy firms in Mekelle and preparing the selection criteria to be used in the interview / recruitment process.

Thank you Sefanit for your valuable help!

Mekelle homecomings

In the last few weeks MfMs was glad to welcome home two of its favourite daughters - Alison Rivett and Terri O'Sullivan back in town after a two-year absence. When Alison as a VSO volunteer and lived in Mekelle between 2003 and 2005, she divided her time between Mekelle Institute of Technology, or MIT for short and MfMs. Her visit was timed for MIT's first graduation and gave her the opportunity to catch up with the developments at MfMs.

Accompanying Alison on her visit was Claire, also from the UK, who has a background / experience in designing dressmaking. Claire organized a number of dress-making workshops for our trainers – aimed at expanding the range of dress-making styles taught to the dress-making trainees.

Terri O'Sullivan, who was a VSO volunteer at the same time as Alison, used to teach Computer Science at Mekelle University and helped out MfMs in her spare time, using her expertise to develop MfMs web site,
www.mumsformums.com

Terri is looking for work in Ethiopia and has put her spare-time to good use once again, updating the MfMs web-site and introducing database technology for the monthly records of the counsellors and care providers. She also provided skills improvement training in Word and Excel to MfMs office staff.

Digging-Deep for the Millennium

On Saturday 28th of June MfMs army of Volunteer Counsellors, Campaigners and workers descended on a hillside on the edge of Mekelle to populate the slopes with young seedling trees- part of a plan by the Mekelle city administration to create a recreation park of the Ethiopian Millennium.

MfMs task was to plant a total of 300 seedling trees! A grey, overcast morning saw MfMs intrepid team, armed with pick-axes, set to work, digging out the holes from the stony hillside. By 11am the backbreaking total of 300 half-meter deep holes were completed thanks to enthusiastic efforts from everyone present-including 3 holes by Teberah and an impressive High-score of 18 by Ahmed, one of our skills trainers.

The following Monday saw the young trees planted and MfMs job complete, confident that the saplings will be well watered by the remaining rainy-season showers, in time for the new Millennium at the start of September!



Tree plantation at Millennium Park

In our Next Issue: Celebrate the Ethiopian New Millennium with us



Welcome speech by Voluntary Executive Director

Seven and a half years ago the world held its breath as the clocks ticked past midnight to usher in a new year and a new millennium. Year “2000”, as well as marking a new millennium, provoked a rash of rumours and neuroses – that planes would fall out of the sky, complex computer and banking systems would crash irretrievably.

Now year “2000” beckons for Ethiopia, working with the ancient Julian calendar dating back to the life of Christ. Ethiopia will be celebrating its New Year and New Millennium on September 12th 2007, or Meskerem 1st 2000, in the Ethiopian calendar.

To mark this special occasion, the next newsletter will be a special Millennium Issue. Join with us in celebrating Ethiopia’s New Millennium and the next chapter in the history of this special country.

Visitors

MfMs has welcomed a number of visitors to its centre:

- CRDA partners from Southern Ethiopia, for experience sharing on HIV/AIDS Volunteer Counselling and Income Generating / Skills Training activities – the partners visited with our trainers and volunteer counsellors / care providers in Mekelle, Axum & Adwa.
- Jonna Boph, who came from the Netherlands and gave us valuable help for the ten days she was here
- Gabriella and her friend Vernon from the USA Gabriella taught English to our office staff for Ten days.
- We also had a rash of visitors from the UK - Gilly Ennals from Sheffield, Becky MacGregor from London, Katie Gallagher from Purley in Surrey, Clare Andrews from Stratford-on-Avon

How you can help

You can help Mums for Mums in different ways:

- You can send a one-off donation for our much-needed new training and day-care centre.
- You can sponsor a young mother for skills training @ 80 Birr per month for 9 months.
- You can sponsor a young mother with children @ 3,600 Birr for a year.
- You can sponsor a counsellor @ 300 Birr a month.

The current rate of exchange means that:

- £1.00 = approximately 18 Birr
- Euro 1.00 = approximately 11 Birr
- \$1.00 = approximately 9 Birr

You can send your donations directly to the Mums for Mums Bank Account:

Swift Code CBETETAA
Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Mekelle Branch,
Tigray, Ethiopia: Mums for Mums, Account number:
3388



For further information please contact us:

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